

and "L'Assommoir" are living books, the greatest their author ever penned.

Passing to "La D^hdcle/\* this is certainly a wonderfully truthful panorama of war and its horrors, though the psychology of several of its characters is open to criticism. Too many of them lack robustness; they seem too full of nerves to be regarded as typical. In the case of Maurice, a mere degenerate, the picture is accurate enough; but assuredly many feelings "which Zola and others have attributed to soldiers are little known in actual war. The majority of military men are far less sensitive than some have said, and incident often follows incident so rapidly in real battle that there is no time for thought or emotion at all. "La Terre" also has faults, the outcome of Zola's purpose, which led him to assemble too many black characters within a small circle; had they been more dispersed among people of an average kind the effect would have been more lifelike. In "Nana" the general blackness of the characters does not seem out of place, for only men and women of a sorry sort gravitate around a harlot. A few more average characters in "La Terre" or, rather, more prominence given to some who scarcely appear in its pages would have greatly improved the book. Here, however, as in "Pot-Bouille," Zola, carried away by his feelings, overlooted that doctrine of average truth, of which

Ste.-Beuve had reminded him apropos of " Th^rkse Raquin." He then admitted that he had piled on the agony unduly, and he made the same mistake in two or three volumes of "Les

pilation at his elbow while he was writing, and every time he borrowed from it a word or expression he marked the latter with a "blue pencil, in order to avoid too frequent a repetition of the same term.